

5.1 Government in relation to employment

5.1.1 Labour Canada

The federal Department of Labour (Labour Canada) was established in 1900 and now operates under the authority of the Department of Labour Act (RSC 1970, c.L-2 as amended by 1980-81, c.60, June 30, 1981). The Minister of Labour is responsible for the Canada Labour Code, in effect since July 1971. It contains sections on labour standards, safety of employees, and industrial relations. The Department administers acts covering fair wages and hours of work, income maintenance for older employees laid off from designated industries, and worker compensation for government employees and merchant seafarers. The Minister reports to Parliament on behalf of the Canada Labour Relations Board, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, the Merchant Seamen Compensation Board and the Labour Adjustment Review Board.

Concerns such as occupational safety and health; consultation between labour, government and industry; technological change; and equality for women in the work force were among the labour issues earmarked for departmental attention in 1986-87.

Federal industrial relations legislation applies to employers, employees and trade unions employed on federal works and undertakings, including the interprovincial and international railways; highway transport; telephone, telegraph, and cable systems; pipelines; canals; ferries, tunnels and bridges; shipping and shipping services; radio and television broadcasting, including cablevision; air transport; banks; grain elevators; flour and feed mills, feed warehouses, and grain seed cleaning plants; uranium mines; and the employees of some Crown corporations and agencies.

The Department is responsible for conciliation and arbitration procedures in industrial disputes and for processing certain complaints stemming from alleged violation of legislation.

It determines wage rates and hours of work for federal government contracts for construction or supplies, and promotes improved industrial relations through union-management consultation and by preventive mediation through industrial relations consultants. The Department funds practical research on the human impact of technological change in the workplace, facilitates labour participation in important policy discussions, and makes possible temporary staff exchanges between labour organizations, government departments, and joint labour-management institutions.

Labour Canada strives to secure a working environment conducive to physical and social well-being, a fair return for effort, and equitable access to employment opportunities. Headquarters is in Ottawa. The six regions are served by regional offices in Moncton, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver and district offices in other cities. Programs and services to the public include enforcement and regulatory responsibilities, education, training and promotional information. The regional offices respond to complaints, investigate accidents, conduct technical surveys, process claims for worker compensation, provide counselling on labour-management relations, organize information seminars to explain legislation administered by the department, and sponsor conferences to further departmental goals and objectives.

The Women's Bureau. Established in 1954, the Women's Bureau concerns itself with all aspects of equality between men and women in the labour force. Its activities include the monitoring and review of legislation, programs and policies and the recommendation of initiatives to bring these into line with social and economic developments affecting female workers. The Bureau works with federal, provincial and international agencies to research relevant issues and improve the situation of working women. It publishes a wide range of material, serves as a clearing house for information on women in the labour force, initiates promotional programs